AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method implemented by a security module in a computing device of performing a password-protected secure function, ~~said~~ the method comprising:

storing authentication indicia for authenticating password entry screens to a user in a memory of the computing device;

receiving a command to execute a password-protected secure function;

temporarily halting execution of programs not needed by the security module while the data entry screen is displayed;

prompting the user to enter a password associated with the secure function by displaying a password entry screen containing the authentication indicia responsive to receiving the command;

removing the data entry screen from the display;

restarting halted programs after the password entry screen is removed from the display; and

executing the password-protected secure function based on the validity of the password entered by the user.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein storing authentication indicia recognized by ~~said~~ the user in ~~said~~ the computing device comprises storing ~~said~~ the authentication indicia in a security module.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein displaying ~~said~~ the password entry screen containing ~~said~~ the authentication indicia comprises displaying ~~said~~ the authentication indicia for a limited time.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising obtaining ~~said~~ the authentication indicia from ~~said~~ the user.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising halting execution of programs running on ~~said~~ the computing device not necessary for inputting ~~said~~ the password while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

6. (Canceled).

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein temporarily halting execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed comprises inhibiting an operating system in ~~said~~ the computing device from responding to interrupts not associated with ~~said~~ the security module.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein temporarily halting execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed comprises inhibiting context-switching by an operating system in ~~said~~ the computing device to programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein temporarily halting execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed comprises:

storing a status table in random access memory used by an operating system in ~~said~~ the computing device, each entry in ~~said~~ the status table relating to a currently executing

program and containing a status indication associated with ~~said~~ the currently executing program;

saving current settings of ~~said~~ the status table; and

changing ~~said~~ the current settings so as to inhibit execution by ~~said~~ the operating system of ~~said~~ the programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein temporarily halting execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the security module while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed comprises:

storing an alternate status table in random access memory used by an operating system in ~~said~~ the computing device, each entry in ~~said~~ the alternate status table relating to a program needed by ~~said~~ the security module;

instructing ~~said~~ the operating system to use ~~said~~ the alternate status table while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

11. (Currently Amended) A device for executing a password-protected secure function comprising:

a secure processor configured to receive a command to execute a password-protected secure function, and to execute a password program to obtain a password associated with the password-protected secure function from a user responsive to receiving the command;

memory operatively connected to the secure processor and configured to store authentication indicia for authenticating password entry screens to the user of the device;

a display operatively connected to the secure processor; and

the secure processor configured to:

output a data entry screen containing ~~said~~ the authentication indicia to ~~said~~ the display;

temporarily halt execution of programs not needed by the secure processor while the password entry screen is displayed;

remove the data entry screen from the display;

restart halted programs after the password entry screen is removed from the display; and

execute the password-protected secure function based on the validity of the password entered by the user.

12. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 11 further comprising a smart card containing ~~said~~ the secure processor and ~~said~~ the memory.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 11 wherein ~~said~~ the secure processor halts execution of programs by inhibiting an operating system from responding to interrupts not associated with ~~said~~ the secure processor while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

15. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 11 wherein ~~said~~ the secure processor halts execution of programs by inhibiting an operating system from context-switching while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

16. (Canceled).

17. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 11 wherein ~~said~~ the secure processor halts execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the secure processor to obtain ~~said~~ the password from ~~said~~ the user by changing settings in a status table used by an operating system while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

18. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 16 wherein ~~said~~ the secure processor halts execution of programs not needed by ~~said~~ the secure processor to obtain ~~said~~ the password from ~~said~~ the user by causing an operating system to use an alternate status table while ~~said~~ the password entry screen is displayed.

19. (Canceled).

20. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 11 wherein ~~said~~ the secure processor and ~~said~~ the memory are contained within a removable security module.

21. (Canceled).